Clinical Practice Guidelines: Toxicology and toxinology/Spider bite

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Date
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Purpose
To ensure a consistent approach to the management of Spider bite.

Scope
Applies to all QAS clinical staff.

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Information security
This document has been security classified using the Queensland Government Information Security Classification Framework (QGISC) as UNCLASSIFIED and will be managed according to the requirements of the QGISF.

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Spider bites are common and fall into three categories:

**Large black OR funnel-web spider**
- Funnel-web spider bites are potentially lethal.[1]
- They are found within southern Queensland up to approximately Gladstone and the mountain region near Mossman.[2]
- All large black spider bites, within the distribution area, are to be managed as if they were a funnel-web spider bites.[3,4]

**Redback spider**
- Redback spider bites are common, but rarely life-threatening.[1]
- Clinical features can be distressing for the patient and refractory to management.

**All other spiders**
- These are rarely of clinical significance.

### Clinical features

**Large black OR Funnel-web spider**
- Localised severe pain at bite site
- Puncture/fang marks are often visible
- Signs and symptoms suggesting severe systemic envenomation (may occur within 10 minutes):[1,5]
  - general: agitation, nausea, vomiting, headache
  - neurological: muscular spasm, numbness/tingling in and around the mouth and altered mental status
  - autonomic: diaphoretic, salivation, piloerection, lacrimation
  - cardiovascular: hypertension or hypotension, tachycardia or bradycardia and pulmonary oedema
- The first indication that a young child has been bitten may be sudden severe illness with inconstable crying, salivation, vomiting, ALOC, or collapse.[5]
Risk assessment

- Do not attempt to capture or injure the spider.
- The Australian Funnel-web spider is the world’s most dangerous spider.[1]
- Patients who have been bitten by an unidentified big black spider in eastern Australia, should be treated as a suspected envenomation by Funnel-web spider.[3-4]

Clinical features (cont.)

**Redback spider**

- Local and regional signs and symptoms
  - Bites are not initially painful
  - Increasing pain
  - Pain radiating from the bite site to the proximal limb, trunk or local lymph nodes
  - Localised or regional diaphoresis
  - Less common: piloerection, localised redness and puncture/fang marks
- Systemic signs and symptoms
  - Nausea, vomiting and headache
  - Malaise and lethargy
  - Potentially generalised pain
  - Less common: hypertension, irritability and agitation (more common in paediatrics), fever, paraesthesia, muscle spasms, priapism

**All other spiders**

- Pain
- Minor non-specific signs and symptoms

Additional information

- All spider bites that result in cardiac arrest should be transported to hospital for anti-venom.
**Note:** Officers are only to perform procedures for which they have received specific training and authorisation by the QAS.